



## **First Monitoring Report**

**1st February - 1st June 2019**

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# Preahrokar Forest Community Network

## First Monitoring Report

1st February - 1st June 2019

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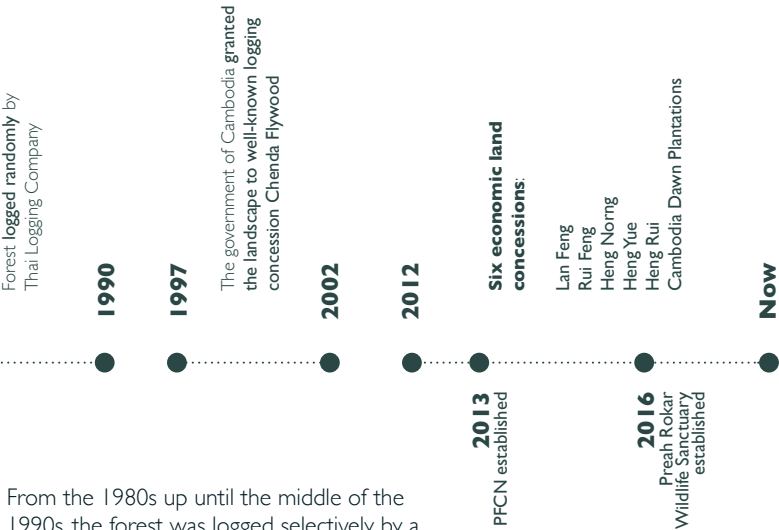
REDEFINING WEB DEVELOPMENT

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# INTRODUCTION

Preah Rokar Forest spans **90,361 hectares** across three districts: Tbeng Meanchey, Chaeb and Chaom Ksan in Preah Vihear province. It borders the Preah Vihear Forest of the northern plains. A total of **22 villages** are found in the vicinity of Preah Rokar Forest and the approximately **20,000 villagers** depend on the forest for their livelihoods. Kuy and non-Kuy indigenous people have established the Preahrokar Forest Community Network (PFCN), an informal group of volunteers aimed at protecting the forest. The Preah Rokar Forest was designated a **Wildlife Sanctuary** by sub-decree of the Royal Government of Cambodia on **June 9, 2016**. The Preah Rokar Wildlife Sanctuary connects two previously established protected areas, providing a vast, contiguous wildlife corridor totaling 687,161 hectares. Located in the heart of the Indo-Burmese Peninsula, it lies within a globally-recognized biodiversity hotspot boasting numerous IUCN threatened species.



From the 1980s up until the middle of the 1990s, the forest was logged selectively by a Thai logging company under the protection of the Khmer Rouge. In 1997, the Government of Cambodia granted the forest to Chenda Plywood, which held the concession until the nationwide logging moratorium came into force in 2002. Since 2012, six economic land concessions have been granted in the forest area, namely: Lan Feng in Tbeng Meanchey district, Rui Feng, Heng Nong, Heng Yue, Heng Rui in Chaeb district and Cambodia Dawn Plantations Ltd in Chaom Ksan district. The conversion of forest inside the economic land concessions has been followed by a surge in illegal logging activities in the Preah Rokar Forest.

These activities raised the concern of the local dwellers of the Preah Rokar Forest. The livelihoods of these communities have been depending on resin tapping as well as the collection of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) for many generations.

During the long period of Chenda Plywood's forest concession (1997 to 2002), the Preah Rokar forest's communities began to campaign against the timber company's **illegal logging of their resin trees**, which was the main problem they wanted to address. They monitored and patrolled the forest from time to time. In 2008, when Ponlok Khmer was established, it began working with the communities on forestry issues, supporting them to mobilize and organize their people.

Image | Resin tree before tapping

In 2013, the communities formed the **Preahrokar Forest Community Network (PFCN)**. They have been patrolling their forest, particularly their resin trees, ever since in a collective action to protect the remaining forest.

In December 2018, Danmission was awarded a grant from Development Innovations to **improve a forest monitoring app** (known as the Prey Lang app), **expand its use** to the Preahrokar Forest Community Network (PFCN) and **increase its impact** in Cambodia. Danmission is a non-profit organization from Denmark that operates in 12 different

countries. The organization has been engaged in Cambodia since the mid-1990s, initially working on livelihood issues, but since expanding its activities into peacebuilding and civil society development.

In 2014, Danmission and the Peace Bridges Organization, a local environmental and rights-based network (Community Peace Building Network), the University of Copenhagen and a Cambodia-based IT company (Web Essentials) developed the app and equipped the Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN) to systematically collect text, photos and sound recordings on forest crimes, forest resources and climate change.

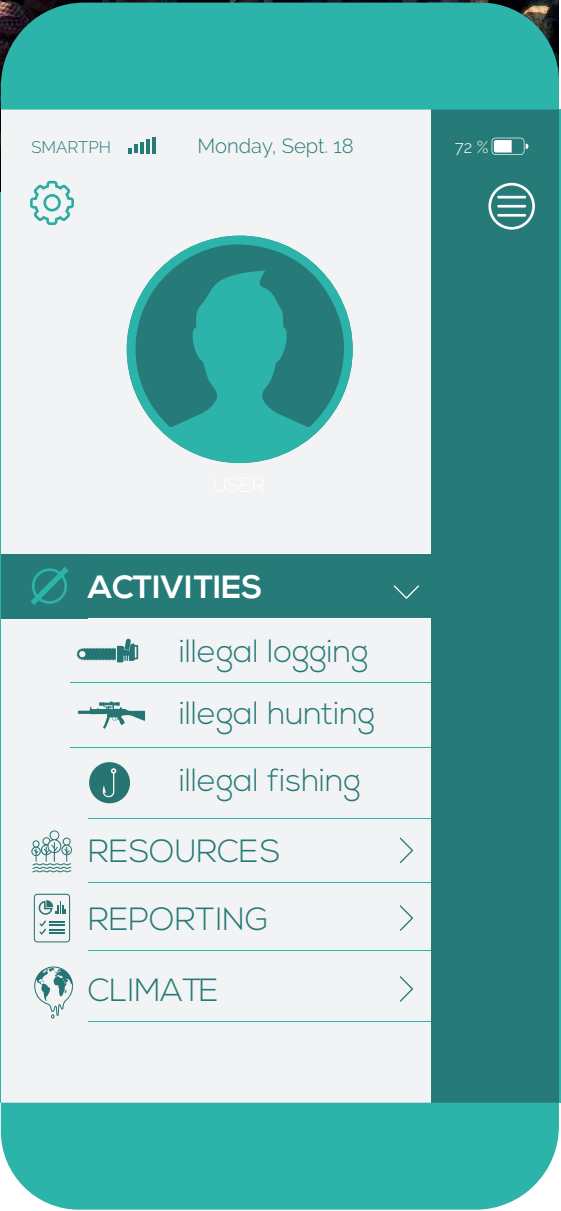
The smartphone app is used to systematically collect data in four major categories:

- **“Activities”** refers to extraction activities occurring in the protected forest area, such as different instances of illegal logging activities, illegal hunting, and illegal fishing.
- **“Resources”** refers to **natural or cultural resources** and **sites** found in the Prey Lang area such as resin trees, medicinal plants, fishing grounds, and spirit forests.
- **“Reporting”** refers to interactions with the authorities such as submitting official reports of illegal activities, confiscated equipment, and joint patrols by patrollers and forest rangers. The category was later expanded to include **potential threats or incidents** of violence to the patroller related to their activities inside the forest.
- **“Climate”** refers to **climate related incidents** such as alteration in the level of the water in local lakes and rivers, alteration in **seasonality of biodiversity, forest fires and floods** as well as climate change adaptation strategies employed from the local people.

The project entitled “It’s Our Forest Too” was initiated in 2014 to help protect the livelihoods of the 200,000+ people in Prey Lang – mainly indigenous Kuy – who depend on the forest for their survival. The **effectiveness and huge potential of the app** has been recognized with **three international awards**, and data has been used to compile monitoring reports and advocate for policy change. Other forest networks have expressed a wish to use the app as well. The app was introduced to PFCN in September 2018 and they started collecting data from February 2019 on.

67 PFCN members (28 women and 39 men) have received training on how to use the app. The results of the data collection have been published in monthly reports<sup>1</sup>. This report will include all the data collected by PFCN since February 2019. PFCN's patrolling using the forest monitoring app has revolutionized their activities. They now have an online database with the most important forest activities and resources. The entries are all supplemented with a picture and a date that functions as a proof of the report. A lot of entries are further accompanied by a GPS coordinate and technicians are working to improve this function continuously. The communities can now assess changes in illegal logging activities over months, the abundance of their resources and changes in their seasonality. Evidently, this innovative information and communication technology will aid PFCN in its long-term goal of a sustainable, community-led management of their forest resources. Most importantly, PFCN can now provide proof and documentation to interested parties as well as use their patrol findings to better advocate and campaign for the protection of Preah Rokar Forest.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ponlokkhmer.org/index.php/2019/03/14/pfcn-report/>





# MAP OF GPS RECORD

Preah Rôkar Wildlife Sanctuary

Cambodia

During the reporting period, 168 validated entries contained **GPS-specific information** (30%).

The following map depicts the validated entries regarding **illegal logging activities** inside the Preah Rôkar Wildlife Sanctuary.

## LEGEND

Preah Rôkar Wildlife Sanctuary

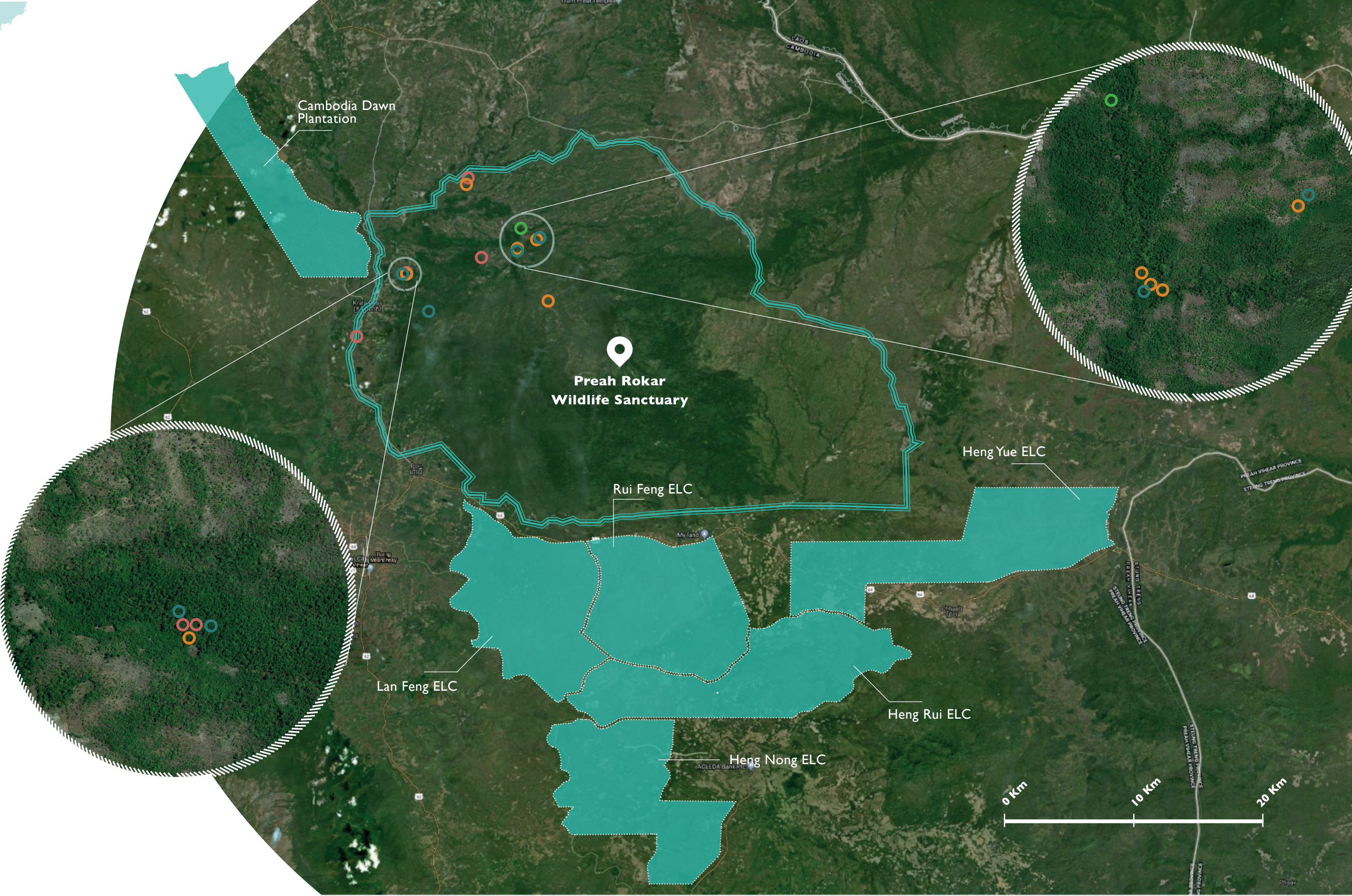
Economic Land Concession (ELC)

Cleared Area

Stump

Planks

Transport





# THE ID OF THE RESULTS

**TOTAL MONITORING PERIOD**  
1st February to 1st June 2019

<b>Total entries</b> (excluding training entries)	660
<b>Validated entries</b>	551
<b>Validation rate</b>	83%
<b>PFCN patrollers</b> 43 members 29 men, 14 women, 19 youth	

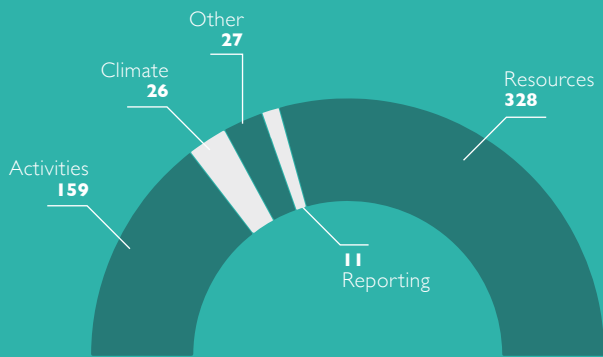


Figure 1 Total Entries



Figure 2 Distribution of Resource entries

Overall, more than half of all validated<sup>2</sup> entries (**59%**) were related to **Resources**, while **Activities** accounted for the second most reported category (**29%**). Monitors submitted a number of entries regarding Climate Change and Climate change adaptation instances (**5%**), as well as information about ceremonies, chainsaw confiscation, and other subcategories (**5%**). Interactions with authorities, under Reporting, were observed to a lesser extent (**2%**) (See Figure 1).

The **importance of resin trees** to the livelihood of PFCN members can be seen from the Resources category, where most of the entries are related to trees (**77%**). The most reported resin tree species include Chheuteal preng (*Dipterocarpus retusus* Blume), Chheuteal bangkuoy (*Dipterocarpus costatus* G. Don), NTFPs and animals accounted for a modest but significant share of entries (12% and 8.5%, respectively). A small number of entries reported sacred sites, including burial sites and sacred trees (2%) (See Figure 2). Almost all entries under Activities (98%) related to illegal logging. The remaining 2% referred to illegal fishing and Economic Land Concessions (ELCs) for mining and plantations.

<sup>2</sup> Entries are validated on the basis of the availability of verified photographic (and/or audio) evidence

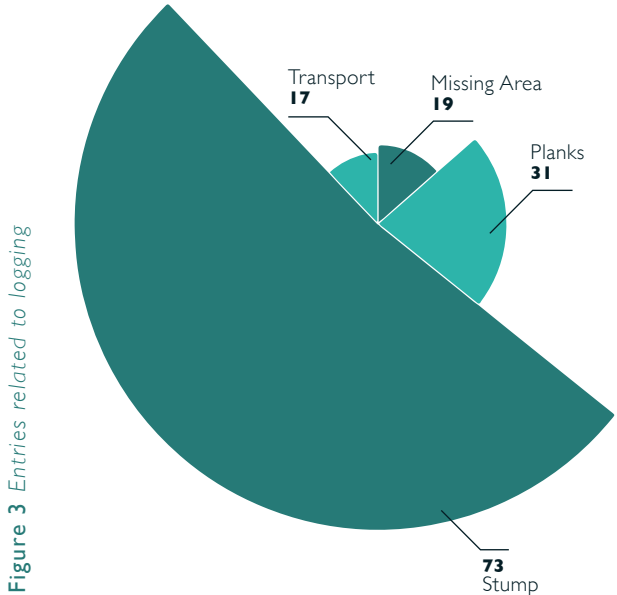


Figure 3 Entries related to logging

As deforestation through illegal logging poses a major threat to the Preah Rokar Forest and members of the surrounding communities, the report is focused heavily on these findings. Looking at the subcategories for this category, a majority (**47%**) of entries related to coming across **stumps**. These observations indicate the individual harvesting of highly profitable luxury trees, to be sold as timber. Illegal loggers further often leave already processed **planks** for later collection. Such findings also formed a significant proportion of overall entries (**23%**). **Area that's missing** refers to areas larger than a few stumps, which was reported in **13%** of cases (See Figure 3). While there is no exact information about the size of these deforested areas, some observers noted that clearings could extend for as much as 100 hectares – further pointing towards the growing pressure on the forest and the rich biodiversity it sustains.

In some cases, monitors also intercepted and/or observed the **transportation of illegally harvested timber (16%)**. In Preah Rokar Forest, such transportation takes place primarily by means of **machine cows**<sup>3</sup>, and in fewer instances **big trucks** and **motorbikes**. If logging continues to grow at its current pace, it is expected that widening roads and growing infrastructure will allow the more frequent use of trucks, increasing the volumes transported and further exacerbating the problem of deforestation – as witnessed in the case of the Prey Lang Forest. Whether it is trees used for extracting resin or construction, plants used for medicinal purposes, edible fruits, or simple cultural value, the Preah Rokar forest contains some of the most important resources for the surrounding communities. Consequently, it is normal that the Resources category has seen a larger input of entries than Activities. However, this does not diminish the importance of the latter, as it highlights the concerns of the widespread illegal logging activities.

<sup>3</sup> Also called *goh-yun*; the local means of transportation inside the forest





# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PFCN

Prior to February 2019, PFCN had no systematic way of collecting data on forest crimes or natural resources. Now, **forest patrols** equipped **with smartphones** and a specially designed app have proved an efficient way of **monitoring the status of the forest**, both in terms of illegal logging and valuable resources. PFCN is quickly becoming acquainted with innovative information and communication technology approaches in order to defend their forest.

With the help of Development Innovations, Danmission and Ponlok Khmer, we have initiated a forest monitoring project that will bring forest protection a step further. More support is, however, needed to ensure a more sustainable future for Preah Rokar Wildlife Sanctuary:

- **Support from NGOs** to build PFCN's capacity and strengthen their technical skills in **natural resource governance, climate change and networking**. They possess the will and the commitment to protect Preah Rokar Wildlife Sanctuary but lacks the means, the funding and the material to allow them to do so.
- **Support** for PFCN's monitoring from **the general population** that lives in and around Preah Rokar Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **Support** from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to **influence the decision-making process** at the local, regional and national level.
- **Concrete actions from the Royal Government of Cambodia to protect the Preah Rokar Wildlife Sanctuary.** By protecting the resin trees and other forest resources, the government will be protecting the livelihoods of the local communities that inhabit Preah Rokar Forest.

We, the members of Preahrokar Forest Community Network (PFCN) as well as villagers from among the Kuy and non-Kuy indigenous peoples around Preah Rokar Forest would like to **suggest the following immediate actions** to the Ministry of Environment and relevant duty-bearers:

1. **Cooperate with PFCN** on the protection of Preah Rokar Wildlife Sanctuary and avoid characterizing the communities that are protecting the forest as illegal groups.
2. Neither the authorities nor the military should **grant any more permits to cut down our resin trees**.
3. **No** part of Preah Rokar Forest should be granted as **social land concession**, especially not to the military.
4. **Halt** all activities of **logging and wildlife trafficking** from Preah Rokar Forest.
5. The rangers and local authorities must join forces to **close down all the sawmills** around the Preah Rokar Forest.